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**CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

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**PRESNET SITUATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

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### Prevailing Tone of Public Opinion

Communist propaganda has succeeded in provoking a fear of war which has resulted in an atmosphere of general uneasiness. Not being informed of the possibilities of solving the present world political difficulties without a world war, public opinion believes that Czechoslovakia could be a "second Korean front."

Comparisons are being made between the decision of the West, which has begun to arm itself but which declares it publicly, and the machinations of the Communists, who only speak "of peace," even though every Czechoslovak citizen with open eyes can realize the contrary each day.

The wearing of Russian uniforms by the army permits the presence of Soviet soldiers in the country to be concealed from the public. The spas of Luhacovice and Karlovy Vary are filled with Russian officers, who carefully avoid mixing with the Czechs.

The regime is developing a strong campaign to enroll the youth in the air force. To make it attractive, youths of 16 to 18 years of age are paid 8,000 to 10,000 crowns a month plus subsistence.

Three weeks ago, the polytechnical school of Brno was closed and converted into a military school. The professors and students have received uniforms.

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Public opinion is realizing little by little that the real reason for the supply crisis -- which is excused by saying that there are no unemployed in the country and because industry is working at full capacity -- is that all productive efforts are devoted to arming.

The informant, who lived near a military airfield, complained that they were disturbed day and night by aerial exercises, organized in groups.

#### Material and Supply Situation

The informant gave the following information on prices:

One kilogram of fat: On the official market, 70 crowns; on the free market, 400 crowns.

One kilogram of butter: Official market, 80 crowns (for imported butter, mixed with a good deal of margarine); free market, 400 crowns.

Meat: Official market, 50-80 crowns per kilogram, but the rations have been reduced from 1,400 grams to 1,100 grams, a part of which is often replaced by other products. Last month, the many foreign delegations which visited Czechoslovakia en route to the Berlin youth festival were served sandwiches and other foods and drinks in most of the railroad stations. As a result, the population in a majority of localities was deprived of meat for an entire month. On the free market the price of meat is from 350 to 400 crowns.

Eggs: Official market, 4-5 crowns; free market, 10.50 crowns.

Potatoes: 5 crowns, but as much as 20 crowns 2 months ago.

Fruit: 20 crowns for poor-quality apples; last week, grapes sold for 80 crowns per kilogram; peaches, 120 crowns per kilogram.

The following products are sold only on the free market: rice, 300 crowns per kilogram; cocoa, recently increased from 800 to 900 crowns per kilogram; corree, 1,500 crowns; tea, 1,800 crowns per kilogram.

The price of cream was recently raised from 200 to 500 crowns per liter.

In regard to clothing, the remainder of the "points," valid until the end of the year, were recently released, but their number is insufficient, and the supplies in the stores are quite mediocre. A Montgomery coat sells for 5,000 crowns and a Hubertus coat for 4,000 crowns, but they are very difficult to find. The prices on the free market are beyond the reach of the wide masses.

Private retail stores have almost disappeared in the cities. They have been replaced by public stores or by cooperatives. The formation of queues in front of the stores is becoming a normal phenomenon.

At the time of the last supply crisis, the lines began to form in front of the stores as early as 0400 hours. Disputes and scuffles among the housewives, provoking police intervention, have been frequent. The following slogan is current among the housewives forced to wait in lines: "Take the well-being of Gottwald and give us back the poverty of Benes!"

A curiosity on the market are the Russian watches, which the watchmakers in all the cities are obliged to display in a prominent place in their showcases, with an indication of their origin. The prices of these wrist watches of white metal start at 4,800 crowns each.

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In general, the food and supply situation in the country is very bad, and general, muted discontent is smoldering in the souls of the oppressed people.

The Communist action called the "open door" which was organized in most cities in recent months should be mentioned especially. This action had its roots in the reaction of public opinion to the difficulties in the flour and bread supply in January and February. At about the same time a panic seized the population as a result of the monetary reform in Poland. People began to talk about the probability of a similar reform in Czechoslovakia. To halt the hoarding of money, propaganda was put out to the effect that only money deposited in banks would be exchanged at par. But the results were completely different from what was expected! A buying fever was produced, also abetted by the reintroduction of bread rationing and by price increases.

The Communist Party replied to this mass buying fever with the "open door" action. They organized visits to private dwellings, by city districts. On the appointed day every householder was required to wait at his home for the visit of a committee, which proceeded to search for supplies. Confiscated items were later exhibited in store windows with the name and address of the person from whom they were confiscated and with disparaging remarks about him.

The informant also mentioned cases in which these requisitions took the form of theft of jewelry and other articles of value.

#### Situation in the Schools

The Faculty of Law in Brno was closed last year. The professors continued to receive their salaries for 3 months. They were paid 5,000 crowns per month, but it was insisted that they seek other employment.

Boarding houses are being organized for pupils in secondary schools and professional schools. The morals of the young people often suffer as a result of coeducation and housing in the same building.

The Party considers children 14 years of age sufficiently mature to decide on their future profession without their parents. Thus, most of the young boys enrolled in special courses for mining apprentices had made this decision at the end of school without their parents' being consulted.

This summer, all children of 12 years of age and over were forced to work one month in the country among the farmers.

There are indications that the publication of the works of Master Alois Jirasek is a private business of Minister Nejedly, and that he is "making millions" on it.

The feeding of children in schools or canteens is becoming more and more general. The tendency is to take the children away from the influence of their parents. As a justification for this it is said that it is necessary to "relieve women of the burden of household work."

#### Situation in the Rural Areas

Agricultural cooperatives are growing in the border regions, where the state is interfering directly in the "voluntary" decision of the farmers, to whom the state had previously granted land confiscated from the Germans. There is also a perceptible movement of Germans into these regions from Eastern Zone Germany; they are reliable Communists. On the other hand, the agricultural cooperative movement is encountering fierce resistance from the farmers in the interior of the country.

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Morale among agricultural workers is poor, and rural manpower is lacking. Thus, the organization of brigades is becoming more and more widespread. Since spring of this year it has become a common practice for children on their way to school to be transported in trucks to the country to perform agricultural work, without the knowledge of their parents.

For all these reasons, the agricultural yield leaves much to be desired. The informant told me that the wheat harvest has not yet been completed this year. Last week, when he crossed Bohemia by train, he saw about half of the harvest still on the fields in shocks.

The organization of courses for workers, permitting them after 9 months to pass their examinations and to proceed to higher schools, has apparently not yielded good results. These special courses have now been extended to 2 years.

The salaries of university professors amount to 4,500-7,000 crowns per month.

Drills with weapons have been organized in professional schools and gymnastic organizations.

#### Miscellaneous

There is a great and constant movement among civil servants and especially among army officers. Sometimes an officer remains in the same place for only 3 months. Generally one cannot be accompanied by one's family. Retired officers and other pensioners are forced to evacuate their lodgings in town in favor of active persons.

When requests are made at administrative offices (for example, to obtain certain documents, ration cards, etc.), it is customary to require written answers to numerous questions on a questionnaire. Such questions as the following have now become standard: "Have you a relative abroad?" "How did he leave the country?" "Are you in contact with him?"

The families of unimportant persons who have left the country secretly are persecuted. They are frequently deprived of their employment; Communists are expelled from the Party.

Families of important persons have not yet felt the consequences of the flight of their relatives; however, it is believed that they are under surveillance, and it is claimed that these persons would be evacuated in the event of a conflict.

Great construction projects for factories and administration buildings are being undertaken, but the work is often suspended because of a lack of installation material. The children's hospital in Brno, the construction of which was begun 2 years ago, is not yet completed for this reason. The construction of dwelling houses is very insufficient, and the housing crisis continues. It is heard that a regulation is being prepared whereby one room for two persons would become the standard for habitation in Czechoslovakia.

The allocation of coal for heating is fixed at 2.5 quintals (250 kilograms) per room per year.

During the last 2 months, 22 priests were arrested in the diocese of Brno.

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Household utensils are almost completely absent from the market, and what one can get is of poor quality. The informant mentioned the purchase of a garden watering can. The can had three holes, but the store refused to take it back as defective.

The motion picture theaters are empty for the most part.

Young widows are refused their pensions, a situation which forces them to work.

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